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## Regenerative Re-use of the Informal City

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### Abstract

The modern theme of vigorous urban transformation has been left behind by contemporary procedures linked to interstice methods and regenerative re-use. It appears appropriate to work on a hypothesis of renovation both of the favela buildings the hills are studded with and of the streets and public spaces that have no identification yet. This is the occasion to provide informal settlements with urban dignity granting them a tourist appeal, inevitably linked to the security issue, constantly threatened by unorganized crime and narco-traffic.

In Florianópolis, the capital of the state of Southern Brazil Santa Catarina, projects of social housing for an elegant urban acquisition are not necessary; what is important is to work on infrastructural equipment, on natural nets, to bring them to light and enhance them as an instrument for development perspectives in a tourist key. Informal settlements are often in the landscape, hiding it: regeneration projects must reveal it in order to cure it, making of it the treasure of the city. The suggested tourism will never become voyeurism or safari of misery if a constant checking of community participation is the test paper for the success of the project.

The project which starts in Italian and Brazilian projects, will be introduced to the involved community by means of artistic and handcraft installations, capable of making it easy to share, simulations with prototypes that can become a system: a canvas covering a public space, the bright color of a façade with the notes of a samba school imprinted, a self propelled urban garden made with wooden boxes.

The perspective for the research is very interesting, providing for the enlargement of the graduate school *Habitação e Cidade* to the "Florianópolis case". This school has developed in São Paulo by the Escola da Cidade, with the involvement of the technicians of the municipality. So it would become in a real international master, with a request for funding of European funds *Erasmus Plus*, that would allow the movement of Italian graduates ready to make an experience on the topic of "informal city" in Brazil.

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## 1. The “state of art”

The most advanced research on the contemporary city is occurring on the planet as the informal settlement system is gradually but rapidly gaining the upper hand over the formal city, "forced" by the regulations of the traditional compact city.

São Paulo calls Mumbai, but also the periphery of African cities, huddled next to the rubbish dump or on them: it is to analyze and compare them in order to extract a spirit of vitality, constantly evolving and changing, centered on the self-construction because of economic necessity, that should not be contradicted in the design phase, avoiding the celebration of the indigence and the overcrowded living.

Making space in the compact tissue and neo-medieval of a *favela* needs to be understood as a timely intervention of recycling of the existing settlement, starting from securing hydro-geological and control of micro-crime, with the insertion of public spaces for community life, not an undifferentiated demolition as in the nineteenth century: the ability to create public places, for meetings and safety passes through an alteration of the urban density and the need to organize alternative residences where a new empty space has been created.

Large numbers of settlements typical of *Corbusian* social housing must not come into contact with the end grain and blur of living in the *favela*, but be located at the edges, in relation to large open spaces, further limiting the possibility of its occupation.

## 2. Favelas of Florianópolis

Consider the case of the *favelas* of Florianópolis, an island in the south of Brazil, known for its beaches and for “conventional” tourism, and not for the number of *favelas* that have climbed from the coastal town on inaccessible slopes of *morro* which is its central backbone.

Florianópolis is the capital of the state of Southern Brazil Santa Catarina, a little Rio with fascinating natural endowment. The first impression, arriving at the island linked with bridges to the mainland (state of S. C.), is to be under a more luminous sky than ours; maybe because of the lack of pollution and the frame of the sea contributes to reflect light, creating a territory mirror wrapping everything.



Fig. 1. (a) Florianópolis: the "favelas system" in the two parts of the city (b) View from the favela of Mont Serrat

The second sensation is that of a city with a double image: from one point of view there is the tourist and playful character celebrated by its beaches (Canasvieiras, Ingleses, Daniela), by dunes and surfing schools, from the other the presence of *favelas* that have become historical, climbing up the slopes of Central Massif.

A double image that appears a contrast between naturalistic enjoyment and urban suffering of a social design that has characterized the Brazil we know and that nowadays is being faced thanks to the new economic possibilities of the nation or – to say better – to the attempt of a different distribution of wealth that has already created a middle class that did not exist twenty years ago.

A re-composition of the division between beauty and poverty is attempted in the inter-university workshop applied to the *favelas* system in Florianópolis, towards a new urban quality that can make them attractive for tourists; they can be “captured” first of all by the privileged outlook on the landscape.

The modern theme of vigorous urban transformation has been left behind by contemporary procedures linked to interstice methods. Here it appears appropriate to work on a hypothesis of renovation both of the *favela* buildings the hills are studded with and of the streets and public spaces that have no identification yet. This is the occasion to provide informal settlements with urban dignity granting them a tourist appeal, inevitably linked to the security issue, constantly threatened by unorganized crime and narco-traffic.

Place of “special” investigation is the crest of the *morro*, which at one time was marked by a cross of light placed at the top of a fervently devotional ascending, a true landmark, replaced by the chaotic densification of television aerials, that orient Brazilian way of life and policy and are really a sort of fourth estate, in this case able to characterize the image of the city.

Recently a settlement by the strong character of war has been added: a police barracks with on the side a landing pad for helicopters “landed” in the wrong way, with its ungraceful concrete pillars, on the rocky hill of the summit of Cordillera, that draws the central island of Santa Catarina.

The hypothesis, tested by the settled communities, to give a direction for tourism development to regenerative re-use of the *favelas*, moves just by the quality of the look of the landscape that offer the summit sites of the island, with easy access from the informal city.

As a matter of fact the edge between informal settlement and the wood – that crosses the island – it tries to penetrate, may be solved by means of a system of urban gardens that can define the transit between what is built and urban scale park. The quality of the new park that momentarily sees some town hall interventions as

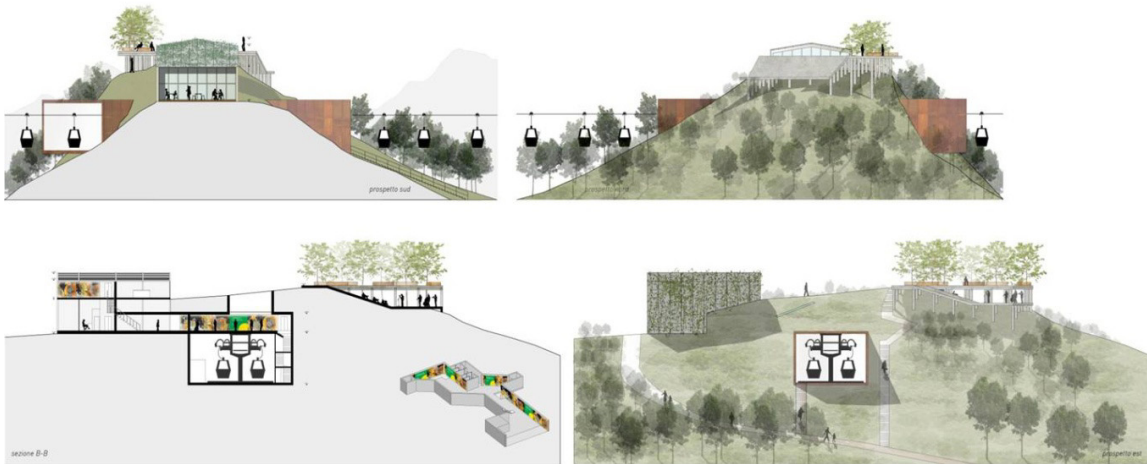


Fig. 2. Project of the station for mechanized lift infrastructure (Graduation thesis by Francesca Marinelli)

breach routes, observation points on landscape, wooden main entrances and little houses for tourist information and reception, is entirely played on the ability to make you get out of the high-sounding rhythm of the island city and to offer a fascinating glance.

The project of mechanized lift infrastructure, for example through the cabins of cable railway, as the Metro-cable in Medellin, reaching points of the landscape, equipped with restaurants and information spaces for tourism, has to be accompanied by the regeneration of pathways that relate to these particular points, changing the identity and tracing routes crossing the *favelas* that climb the steep mountain slopes (Mont Serrat, Penitenciária, Morro d'Horacio, Serrinha).

The revival of the tourist trail in the park and on the crest of the hill will be a network of ecological paths at high altitude which will provide a special look of the island landscape: the path back towards the city center will take place through the streets of the *favelas* revitalized and made more secure by a dense open-air market, tropical edition of north African souk, with the economic involvement of the inhabitants.

It will be the occasion of a regeneration of the informal settlements that are in direct continuity with the center of the city, that has already become a tourist attraction thanks to markets, public spaces, offers of transport to the beaches: the *favelas* should be transformed into a town, with both a new formal appeal, for example through the use of bright colors and interventions of artists on the façades or on the surrounding walls, and with safety, primarily against the drug trafficking.

Inside the *favela*, tourists will find proposals related to self-production of the community: the markets that will offer the sale of agricultural products, grown from the allotments made on the margins in front of the forest: the samba schools open to visitors, puts on display the floats in preparation for the Carnival and the sale of papier-mâché models, produced by a revived local crafts. Many of the products will be "zero kilometer", coming from the new system of urban gardens, which will also have the role of educating in sustainable environmental practices and a self-emancipation of the entire community; the inhabitants will have the possibility to transform the houses of *favelas*, restructuring them as Bed & Breakfast.

An ideal place to take a new central merchant character is the space of brick and grass that surmounts the historian tank that gave the original name to the place: before being called Mont Serrat its name was Morro da Caixa de Agua.



Fig. 3. Project for a renovation of "Caixa de água" (International charrette, Vicenza, November 2013)



The project will start by the re-use of historic artifacts, realizing for temporary installations for the market capable of turning into facilities for outdoor performances and concerts.

The roads systems, vehicular and pedestrian, which innervates the settlement system of *favelas*, should be reinterpreted as clever re-use that creates a new relationship between them, addressing the priority issue in the overall design of the waters that come down in a torrential way during rapid rainfall. The floors, whether in stone or cement-concrete colored pasta or asphalt, must have a character of porosity that can make drainage of water easy on the steep slopes on which they were clumsily implemented.

The tracks will be set up on a new distribution network of small public spaces, obtained with therapeutic demolitions and reconstructions on site without significant increases in density: here we will put other segments of the tourism offer, such as bed and breakfasts, bars, restaurants, characterized by outdoor areas shaded by tarpaulins placed on cables strung between the houses.

The suggested tourism will never become voyeurism or safari of misery if a constant checking of community participation is the test paper for the success of the project.

The project which starts in Italian and Brazilian projects, will be introduced to the involved community by means of artistic and handcraft installations, capable of making it easy to share, simulations with prototypes that can become a system: a canvas covering a public space, the bright color of a façade with the imprinted notes of a samba school, a self propelled urban garden made with wooden boxes.

### 3. Vision for the future

The perspective for the research is very interesting, providing for the enlargement of the graduate school *Habitação e Cidade* to the "Florianópolis case". This school has developed in São Paulo by the Escola da Cidade, with the involvement of the technicians of the municipality. So it would become in a real international master, with a request for funding of European funds *Erasmus Plus*, that would allow the movement of Italian graduates ready to make an experience on the topic of "informal city" in Brazil.



Fig. 4. Two posters for workshops about regeneration of favelas of Florianópolis

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